

# Being a Part of St Michael's Choir



*The choir of St Michael and All Angels  
singing at Portsmouth Cathedral, August 2025*

**St Michael's Music Committee**

updated September 2025

## Our choir

St Michael's choir is a special group of people, continuing a long tradition of excellent choral singing in a robed choir – one of very few such choirs in the area. It's a wonderful experience to make music together, striving as we do for the highest standards possible, and seeking to find a safe place of friendship and common endeavour in which to do so. Whether you are new to the choir, or have been with us for many years, we hope you will always find it a **welcoming, enjoyable, and safe** environment. If ever that's not the case, let us know and we will do our best to put things right.

While it's enjoyable and, for many, restorative, for us to sing together, the choir exists not for our benefit, but primarily to enhance worship within our Christian community, singing music that was written for exactly this purpose and context. So being part of the choir also has responsibilities, to preserve and evolve the practices and traditions for today's generations, while building on the rich legacy of the past. This document<sup>i</sup> is intended to provide an overview of those responsibilities, and of the resources available to help you. The document does not cover all aspects of what the choir does, so do ask if you find something confusing. (You're almost certainly not the first to do so!)

If you have any questions about the way we work, or if you feel you need additional help of any kind, don't hesitate to discuss this with the Director of Music (DOM), a member of the St Michael's Music Committee (see the list on page 8), or any member of the choir, all of whom will do their best to ensure you get whatever help you need.

## What the choir will give you:

To support our commitment to high standards, we provide all choir members with:

- **Music** – Our librarian will assign you a temporary or numbered pigeonhole, containing a hymn book, psalter, and a music folder. You will also receive scores for all upcoming music.
- **Robes** – these are provided to all choir members. They should be worn with black shoes. They consist of a cassock (the long robe), a surplice (the white outer robe), and a cravat or neckerchief (worn round the neck).<sup>ii</sup>
- **Online resources** – these can help you plan your attendance and learn the music, and they include:
  - **Music Lists** – Details of all the choir music at upcoming services. They may also indicate when music will be practised. See: [Music Lists](#)<sup>iii</sup>
  - **Attendance spreadsheet** – This helps you plan and notify absence, and the DOM to plan the music. See: [Attendance/Absence](#)
  - **Playlists of some of the music we sing** – These help you get to know and to practise music at home. See: [Choir Upcoming](#) and [Choir Past](#).
  - **The website music page** – This contains regularly updated information, blogs, and links, relevant to the choir and those interested in music at St Michael's. See: [nsab.org.uk/music](https://nsab.org.uk/music)
  - **Social media accounts** – YouTube: [@NSABparish](#); Facebook: [@NSABparish](#); Twitter/X: [@BassettChoir](#) and [@NSABparish](#)

- **Opportunities to sing in some of the UK's most beautiful cathedrals** at annual summer visits, and usually at least one other visit during the year.
- **Most importantly, a group of like-minded people** with whom to share your love of music, and making music together within worship.

Overall, the choir provides a great opportunity to learn and improve your singing and reading music. Just remember if you're new, that you're not expected to be able to do everything straightaway. Much of the repertoire is familiar to those who have sung with the choir for several years, so new choristers often find there's not enough time in rehearsal to get everything right. Relax! Long-standing members of the choir will tell you it took many months before they felt they were fully contributing.

## What we ask you to give to the choir

Singing in any choir is a shared endeavour. We believe that the extent to which we are 'in tune and in time' with each other – both literally and cooperatively – will be the extent to which we achieve the highest standards as a choir. This has implications for what we do in choir settings, not only while singing in services, but in all our actions as choristers, as we seek to enhance worship for all participants.

The norms for all choir members are:

- **Regular attendance and notifying absence** – The choir would not be able to sing the repertoire it does without

members who attend all practices and services (except when they are on holiday or unwell).<sup>iv</sup> Others, who are unable to make this level of commitment, attend according to a pattern that the DOM understands and can plan around. If you are considering joining the choir, you may wish to come occasionally for a while, before discussing with the DOM the level of commitment that you can make, checking that this is acceptable. It's important for everyone to let the DOM know if they will be absent from any service via the attendance spreadsheet or, if it is at short notice, via a direct message.

- **Time-keeping** – It's important to arrive in good time for choir practice, and the practice before services. It gives us time to prepare music and to robe, and it is respectful of others' time. If you do arrive late before a service, we ask that you robe in the vestry before entering the chancel.<sup>v</sup>
- **Respectful participation in services** – Sing to the best of your ability, joining in with prayers, responses, and other directions as appropriate to each service, and avoid distracting others.
- **Looking after our music** – Keep your music in your allocated pigeonhole. If you take music home to practise, return it to the church for all practices and services that you attend, and ensure it is returned to the library when the choir has sung the piece.
- **Looking after our robes** – Robes are worn for all services, and cassock-only for the practice before services. Keep your own robes clean and tidy, including washing them regularly. If your robes do not fit or need repair, see the Wardrobe Supervisor who will help you.

- **Caring for children and young people** – Members of the Junior Choir, children in the congregation, and young people who sing with the senior choir, all require special consideration. From time to time the Director of Music or Parish Safeguarding Officer may give guidance concerning children. In any case, be kind and considerate towards them, and always help to provide a good example for them to follow.
- **Respecting one another, and those whom we meet** – We are committed to promoting equality and diversity within our choir. This means there will be a variety of views and beliefs. We ask that you always respect these differences and celebrate what binds us together.

Finally, we all have a general responsibility to ensure the safety of others, especially children and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, but if you have a specific concern about safeguarding, you should share it with the Parish Safeguarding Officer or a member of the clergy.<sup>vi</sup> The contact details for the choir and parish are included below and there are further details about safeguarding on the parish website:

[nsab.org.uk/safeguarding/](https://nsab.org.uk/safeguarding/).

## And finally...

Enjoy the choir, and nurture it. Choirs are precious and fragile. You can enhance our choir and strengthen it, and we hope you will.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> This document was compiled by the St Michael's Music Committee with feedback and improvements from the whole choir. It was adopted by the PCC at a meeting on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024, as part of its safeguarding policy, and is updated regularly.

<sup>ii</sup> If you have an RSCM medal, you are encouraged to wear it at all services. Academic hoods may be worn at non-eucharistic services, as directed by the Director of Music. Other items (for example British Legion poppies or charity badges) may only be worn for a limited period, and with the consent of the Director of Music.

<sup>iii</sup> If you do not have an electronic version of this document, the web links may be obtained by emailing [music.admin@nsab.org.uk](mailto:music.admin@nsab.org.uk).

<sup>iv</sup> Naturally, all of us are occasionally away or unable to attend choir for other reasons, which is completely understandable and acceptable. There are normally 2 evening services a month, as well as some midweek services for major festivals. The choir does not usually sing at St Michael's in August, or on the Sundays immediately after Christmas and Easter.

<sup>v</sup> Practices are on Wednesday evening, 7.30 – 9pm (Juniors 6.30 – 7.45pm), and before all services, (usually at 9.15am for Eucharist and 5.30pm for evensong, unless otherwise advised).

<sup>vi</sup> Safeguarding is a key concern of the Music Committee and a standing item on its agenda. All junior choir helpers are DBS checked and required to complete safeguarding training. The parish has also requested that all members of the choir complete the online diocesan training on safeguarding (Level 1). Details of the required training can be obtained from the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

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## Contact details

**Director of Music:** Andrew Hanley – [music@nsab.org.uk](mailto:music@nsab.org.uk)

**SM Music Committee:** Andy Carmichael (Chair), Sarah Kuzan (Secretary), Matt Rymell (Finance), Ian Knight (Library), Chihiro Mizuta (Wardrobe), Peter Balkwill. Contact at a choir practice or via the committee secretary's email: [music.admin@nsab.org.uk](mailto:music.admin@nsab.org.uk)

**Parish Safeguarding Officer:** Helen Carmichael – [safeguarding@nsab.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@nsab.org.uk)

**Clergy:** The Rector (currently in vacancy) – [rector@nsab.org.uk](mailto:rector@nsab.org.uk), Norman Boakes (Assistant Priest) – [norman@nsab.org.uk](mailto:norman@nsab.org.uk)

**Churchwardens:** Helen Carmichael, and (currently in vacancy) – [churchwarden@nsab.org.uk](mailto:churchwarden@nsab.org.uk)

**Church Office:** [office@nsab.org.uk](mailto:office@nsab.org.uk), tel: 023 8098 2836